INTERACTIVE MEDIA ENTERTAINMENT AND GAMING ASSOCIATION, INC. v. ATTORNEY ... THE UNITED STATES Doc. 5 Att. 7

# All Things Digital

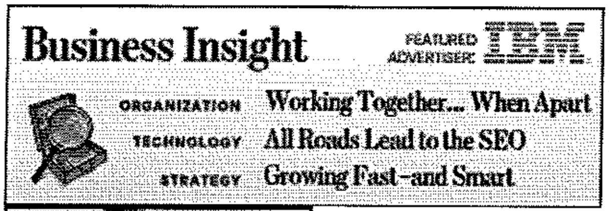
Skip to main content.

## BoomTown

### What Should Yahoo Do: Sue Decker's Listening Tour

More Changes (Yes, More!) at Yahoo!

Advertisement


Business Insight
FEATURED ADVERTISER: IBM
ORGANIZATION Working Together... When Apart
TECHNOLOGY All Roads Lead to the SEO
STRATEGY Growing Fast–and Smart

## Digital Daily

### NEW FOR XBOX 360! Warranty Extension 2007: The Red Ring of Death

## News, analysis and opinion about the digital revolution.

Search All Things Digital. search

- Home
- Kara Swisher
- Walt Mossberg
- Digital Daily
- Voices
- Video
- D Conference

Dockets.Justia.com

- About Us

# Walt Mossberg's Column Archive

## Personal Technology from The Wall Street Journal

### You Have Weapons In Your Computer To Monitor Your Kids

June 14, 2007
by Walter S. Mossberg

Sphere Share Print

One of the most vexing problems in home computing is finding a way for parents to govern their children's use of computers and the Internet. The goal is to keep their kids safe from the creepier content and people on the Internet, and from spending too much time on the computer.

Of course, in many families, these problems are solved with good parenting skills, and establishing trust and limits. But even strong parents could use some technological help.

For years, add-on programs have attempted to give parents some control over what children can do on the computer. Some of these have been OK, but many have had weaknesses that were exploited by kids, who are typically technically savvier than adults.

Many parents, however, don't realize that the latest versions of the two main computer-operating systems, Microsoft's Windows Vista and Apple's Mac OS X Tiger, have parental controls built right in.

On both platforms, you can control even which programs a child can run. This is key, because it prevents kids from running alternative Web browsers or other programs that may not be susceptible to parental controls. Both also allow you to specify which Web sites a child can visit, another crucial feature.

LOADING PLAYER

These built-in controls are free of charge and fairly easy to use. Even better, because they are designed by the same companies that built the operating system and aren't bolted on afterward, they can impose limits in ways that kids may find harder to evade.

I have been testing these built-in parental controls. While they aren't perfect, I can recommend them as powerful tools to help parents get a handle on their children's computing and online activities.

On both Windows and Mac, the trick is to make sure the computer used by a child has multiple accounts, or logins. One, for a parent, should be set up as an "administrator" account, the type that grants its user powers to change various settings, including the power to establish parental controls on other accounts. This administrator account should be protected by a password — and this password should never be shared with the child. If the child knows it, he or she can log in as the administrator and weaken or remove the controls.

In addition, you should set up a standard, or more limited, account for each child who uses the machine. People logged in via these accounts can't change many settings on the computer and can't override the controls.

Once logged in to your administrator account, you can apply different limits to each child's account. In Windows Vista, you can find the parental-controls settings in the Control Panel, under the heading User Accounts and Family Safety. You must be using the Home Basic, Home Premium, or Ultimate versions of Vista to apply these boundaries. They aren't available in the Business or Enterprise versions.

On the Mac, in Tiger, you can find parental controls in the System Preferences program, by clicking on the Accounts icon. You select the standard account you want to control and then click the tab labeled Parental Controls.

In addition to restricting which Web sites kids can visit and which programs they can run, Vista, but not the Mac, includes an extensive system of controls on games. On the other hand, the Mac allows you to block a child from using a printer or burning CDs.

The Mac system, but not Vista, allows you to specify exactly with whom a child can exchange emails or instant messages — as long as the child is using Apple's own built-in Mail email program and iChat instant-messaging program. To ensure compliance, you would have to limit the child to using only these programs and not competitors or Web sites that perform these functions.

In Vista, you may be able to set up similar limitations within the individual email or instant-messaging program, but it's easier on the Mac. If a nonapproved person attempts to send your child an email, the Mac system can even forward the email to you.

On the other hand, Vista, but not the Mac, allows you to set time limits for a child's use of the computer. Another strong Vista feature absent on the Mac is a detailed report on the child's activities that can be emailed to the parent — though the report doesn't include email and instant-messaging activities. Vista also can filter out Web pages based on content categories, such as sex or drugs.

Apple is planning to add a time-limit feature, Web-content filtering and a new activity-logging feature in its forthcoming Leopard operating system, due in October.

Determined kids wanting to view pornography or contact strangers could probably find ways to evade both systems. It's awfully hard to shut down access to everything of which you disapprove without also blocking access to valuable content and functions. But the logging and reporting features should at least make evasions detectable after the fact.

So, if you want to put some technological muscle behind your parenting, don't overlook the parental-control features hiding in your own PC.

- Email me at mossberg@wsj.com. Find all my columns and videos online free at the new All Things Digital Web site, http://walt.allthingsd.com.

Published on June 14, 2007

Print Share Sphere Comment Tagged: OS, Walt Mossberg, pornography, online, kids, parental controls, Leopard, Web, Vista, Internet, Microsoft, Windows, browser, Mac, Personal Technology | permalink

## Add a Comment

You must be logged in to post a comment. Sign up here or log in below.

Username:

Password:

☐ Remember me

Login »

« Previous Column
Next Column »

## Search The Mossberg Archives

search 2 years of Walt's c search

## Recent Personal Technology Articles

- Accessories for iPhone Are Hitting Market; Some Are Worthwhile July 05, 2007
- Ask.com Takes Lead In Designing Display Of Search Results June 28, 2007
- Ahead of the iPhone, Other Makers Offer Some Quality Devices June 21, 2007

Personal Technology Archives »

## Advertisement